

In common with every true and sincere admirer of the art, I shall hail with delight the day when the cultivation and improvement of architecture shall be deemed an object of sufficient importance to occupy the attention of the legislature: when, instead of the misshapen mass, we shall see arise the classic and magnificent pile, such as shall hand down the enduring fame of our country to remotest posterity, and confer upon her children an elevation of character and nobility of soul, which shall pass unimpaired from generation to generation, and shine the brighter through the lapse of ages.

W. M. BUCKNALL.

INTERFERENCE WITH ARCHITECTS' WORKS.

THE WELLINGTON SQUARE, EDINBURGH.

WHATEVER may be the practice on the other side of the Atlantic, there is, in the old world at least, a peculiar sacredness attached to the literary works of meritorious men, which effectually protects them from the hand of the interpolator. We have just to imagine such an announcement as "The Lady of the Lake," or "Marmion," with additions and improvements by John Wilson, or the professor's own beautiful poems altered to suit the fashion of the times by a poet of some future age; and our whole nature seems instinctively to recoil from the very thought of such a sacrilege. Nor is this sentiment confined to literature alone. Painting and sculpture are also alike protected by this most salutary principle: Zeuxis may not add from his treasures to the canvas of Apelles; and the choicest tints of even his palette would be more obnoxious than the very blemishes of age and neglect upon the marble of Praxiteles.

Might I ask why it is that our "modern Athenians" so readily tolerate the infringement of this same morality in regard to the sister art of architecture? Can it be that we are as yet aesthetically blind to the merits of this noble art, and that in this particular instance our moral sense requires still to be awakened? Every noble building is a poem in stone and lime. Upon what principle, then, can we take it upon us, not only to endanger the reputation of two architectural authors, but actually to break in upon and destroy those grand criteria of unity and propriety, which it is the highest ambition of every artist, whether poet or painter, sculptor or architect, to attain, by forcing into one incongruous result two distinct compositions, each in itself a completed design, and in no wise akin to the other?

"Hanno capiti cervicem pictor equinam
Jungere si velit, risum teneatis, amici?"

We have been guilty of doing this in times past; and now it would appear that we are again about to repeat the offence.

Look at the Royal Institution, Edinburgh. Here is an instance in which the sculptor is obviously made amenable, in spite of himself, to architectural rules, and as an architect, or at least with the architect, he is accordingly made to stand responsible to public judgment and criticism for the rank which that building occupies in the scale of merit as a completed work of art. I do not hesitate to say that in consequence of this, a great injustice is done both to Mr. Playfair and to Mr. Steele; and I object to this interlineation or cross-reading, so to speak, of two architectural authors, just on the same principle that I would object to the introduction of a lyric ballad of one author into the epic poem of another. What is more beautiful, in its own place, than Moore's "Believe me if all those endearing young charms," &c. &c. yet how should we like in a new edition of Milton, to find it put into the mouth of Adam, in the course of his rapturous address to Eve in the garden of Paradise? Assuredly the elegance of the composition introduced, whether it be in literature or in art, will never justify the bad taste of such interpolations: far less will it compensate for the absence of those sentiments of veneration and of justice which ought at all times to protect the memorials of genius, whether living or departed, from such violent and unseemly abuses.

This objection applies with equal force to

the contemplated alteration of the Register House. This building, second to none in Edinburgh in point of symmetrical elegance and just proportion, so broad and spacious, yet withal so light and graceful, is about to undergo a change. It is not my present purpose to discuss the question whether that change, so far as effect is concerned, is likely to be for the better or for the worse; although it certainly does appear to me to be an arrangement quite at variance with all propriety both in art and in sentiment. It is less to the æsthetical than to the moral view of the question, as being that to which, with all its importance, we seem hitherto to have been scarcely, if at all, alive, that I would apply the preceding argument in giving in my humble protest against this contemplated innovation. Every great work of art is sacred to the memory of its author. The Register Office is Robert Adam's monument—the most beautiful of all the works of that eminent architect—"si monumentum queris, circumspice." It is the temple of his name and fame, and upon its preservation his professional reputation with posterity mainly depends. Let all, therefore, who have any respect for the feeling which reveres at once the memory and the works of the departed sons of genius, and especially let those influential men amongst us, who are now engaged in the fields of literature, art, and science, in rearing up their own honourable memorials, concur in this act of justice to the memory of Robert Adam, by preserving from the hand of a needless and indiscreet innovation, this edifice, which is his best and crowning work.

For my part, I should be disposed to remove the shabby railing in St. Andrew's-square, and, in the open Place, to set down the Wellington statue on the west of Melville's pillar, facing along George's-street; while, in a corresponding position on the east, might be placed the Earl of Hopetoun, who is at present certainly "lost to sight," however "dear to memory;" and, on the north and south, the statues of Queen Victoria and the Duke of York, both of which are at present in unfavourable positions. With such an arrangement, and a few more buildings like the Bank of the British Linen Company, this square might be made one of the finest in the world.

Edinburgh.

VITREUVIUS.

ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITIONS.

PROPOSED CHURCH, SANDFORD DISTRICT, CHELTENHAM.

THE instructions furnished to architects by the committee for erecting a new church at Cheltenham, are of such an extraordinary character, that I venture to trouble you with a few remarks thereon, hoping that this, after the many warnings of a somewhat similitude, though not so gross, that we have witnessed, may arouse the members of our profession to a knowledge of their own dignity and proper position, and to a determination not to suffer themselves to be dictated to by persons, who are either wholly ignorant of the subject they pretend to adjudicate upon, or else who insult the whole profession by issuing such instructions.

I enclose you a copy, by which you will perceive that accommodation is required for 1,000 worshippers in a church, to be built of stone, for the sum of 4,000*l.*, including all internal fittings and fixtures, a dwarf boundary wall with two entrances, proper flues for warming and ventilating, architect's charges for plans, working drawings, superintendence, travelling expenses, &c. This is simply an impossibility. To build a church as a church should be built, in the severest manner, would cost at least 6,000*l.*, and this amount would not allow of oak being used either for the roofs or seats. That buildings sometimes are erected at a cheaper rate than this I cannot gainsay, as I saw a specimen of one a few weeks back, in the neighbourhood of London; and I may say that I never before witnessed more disgraceful workmanship. The walls were built in two thicknesses, the inner of brick and the outer of Kentish rag stone, without any bond, and the brickwork looked more like rubble work than anything else; all the dressed stone base mouldings were just sufficiently let into the wall to hide the joint—at the utmost an inch—and without a single

bond-stone. Had it not been that the masonry beneath was thicker than that above, they could not have stood at all; and the rest of the work was of a similarly bad description. On asking who the architect was who could allow such work, and who the builder, I was informed that they were one and the same person.

Is it such a building as this that the Cheltenham committee require, or have they a few thousand pounds in reserve to place at the disposal of the architect they may give the work to? If the latter, I do not hesitate to say that they act unfairly to the other competitors; and if the former, they would do better to advertise for a temporary church, to be used until their funds allow of their building a permanent one. The fault of the absurd expectations of building committees, however, must in some degree, I am sorry to say, rest with some of the members of our profession.

I heard of an instance the other day in which a building committee called for designs for a church to accommodate 300 worshippers, for the sum of 1,300*l.*, to include every possible expense, and I am credibly informed that from the plans they received for the same, they selected a set which professed to give them what they required, and a tower and spire, nearly 100 feet high, into the bargain. Now, in this case, the Committee can scarcely be blamed for wishing to get the best they could for the money they have at their command; they acted no doubt in perfect ignorance as to the expense likely to be incurred in carrying out such a design, and relied on the architect having prepared his design in accordance with their instructions; but is it possible the author of the design could be ignorant himself about the probable cost of such a building? Let us see what chance there is of the sum named sufficing. First deduct the architect's commission, which would amount to about 65*l.*, and his travelling expenses, say 25*l.*, and there remains very little more than 1,200*l.* for the building, one-half of which, at least, would be required for the tower and spire, if properly built, leaving 600*l.* for the erection of chancel, nave, aisles, transept, and porch, together with all fixtures and fittings!

Such cases could not occur if competent judges were called in to make a selection.

The value the Cheltenham Building Committee set upon an architect's professional services is another point to which I wish to call attention; in their instructions they "reserve to themselves the full right and power to delay or suspend, after commencement, the erection or completion of the works," which is very advisable that they should; but then they add, that "in case the building shall not be commenced within twelve months after notice to the architect that his plans are approved, he shall be entitled to receive for his plans, designs, and drawings, the sum of 50*l.*, and no more, in full discharge of all claims for such plans, &c., which are then to become the property of the committee"—that is to say, they have only to delay the works a twelvemonth to become entitled to a full set of working drawings and specification, together with the design itself, for the sum of 50*l.* Such a set would comprise at least 100 drawings, which must all have been copied, and two copies of the specification. This, one would imagine, was bad enough; but should the works have been commenced the architect's position might be still worse, for should they be suspended when 1,000*l.* worth had been executed, he would have furnished the above-named drawings, &c., and still only receive 50*l.*, so that for his time in setting out and superintending the works and his travelling expenses, &c., he would not be remunerated at all.

Surely it is time that the architects should bestir themselves, and put a stop to such insults being offered them; how this is to be done can best be determined by themselves; I would only suggest that they should meet together and lay down a set of regulations as to on what terms they would furnish designs in competition.

It always appears to me that these committees consider that they confer a favour on the profession by calling for a competition, whereas, in reality, the great advantage is to themselves. If there was no such thing as competition, and a building committee required a design, they would have to apply to

* The architect and the sculptor should work together.—Ed.